

SCIENCE & EDUCATION Impact

Benefits from USDA/Land-Grant Partnership

City Cousins

Land-Grant/USDA efforts improving urban lives.

Ninety percent of the nation's population resides in urban, metropolitan and suburban communities — and these populations are growing. They also confront multifaceted issues of communities, families, health, education, poverty and general well-being. The USDA and Land-Grant universities provide invaluable help to these city cousins.

Payoff

- **Garden cities.** City gardens provide green space, wholesome food and community bonding for urban residents. **Kentucky** Extension assisted with 515 home and community gardens. The value of these gardens in food and social assistance was estimated at \$463,500. **Nebraska** Extension helped launch a farmer's market in a poverty-stricken section of Omaha. **Maryland** Extension helped convert some of Baltimore's 5,000 vacant lots into community gardens. **Cornell** Extension established partnerships for intergenerational community gardens.
- **Better neighborhoods.** A community development corporation sponsored by **South Carolina State** is improving neighborhoods through grassroots meetings with local residents. In one Orangeburg County community, the program helped repair seven unsafe homes and supply Internet access to more than 50 residents. **Minnesota** researchers showed St. Paul city planners that renovating run-down houses is more cost effective in the long term than razing or ignoring these structures. A \$42,000 investment in renovation yields \$59,000 in tax revenue and cost savings.
- **Answering the calls.** Many states are tapping volunteer power to transfer knowledge. For example, in **North Carolina**, more than 2,500 Master Gardener volunteers provided approximately 133,000 hours of educational assistance to 455,000 residents. In **Oklahoma**, nearly 835 Master Gardeners contributed nearly 39,300 hours of volunteer service that's reached some 93,800 Oklahomans. This translates to over a half million dollars in service donated. **Texas A&M's** Master Naturalist program trains community volunteers in natural history and resource ecology. The

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<http://www.reeusda.gov/success/impact.htm>

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program provides more than 30,000 hours of service valued at more than \$450,000.

- **Welcome wagons.** As people move into urban areas, they face challenging adjustments. **Georgia** Extension provided a bilingual program to immigrants addressing life issues such as education, shopping, parenting, home maintenance and job skills. The program reached 2,000 Hispanic families in 2000. **Minnesota** Extension helped Southeast Asian immigrants deal with language, environmental and social barriers to make their lives safer and easier. **Alabama** Extension established an information network for rural residents moving into urban areas. People who move from urban settings to the country also face challenges. **Texas A&M** created the Urban Rancher Web site to prepare city dwellers for life in the country. Each month, the site receives some 15,000 hits.
- **Mutually beneficial efforts.** Rural and urban interests can work together for their mutual benefit. In **Idaho**, Extension workers offered a course on small acreage farming/market gardening for rural and urban residents that drew participants from eight counties in Idaho and Washington. **Cornell's** Farming Alternatives Program developed the concept and practice of civic agriculture, which embeds local farming and food enterprises into the economic network of their home towns, improving social and economic health and vitality in communities. The program has spread to thousands of individuals throughout the Northeast.
- **Education for urban jobs.** Many Land-Grant universities provide training for urban jobs. **Maryland** added urban forestry to its undergraduate program to train tree care professionals and developed the nation's first General Forestry Correspondence Course designed to help the state's 125,000 private forestland owners. The award-winning program is now in Pennsylvania, New York, Connecticut, Michigan and Massachusetts.
- **Farm awareness.** Young people in urban areas often know little about the sources of food and fiber. States are addressing this issue through outreach agricultural education programs. In **Oklahoma**, urban youngsters were offered an aquatic ecology or aquaculture program to help them understand relationships of aquatic organisms with their environment. **Texas A&M**

Extension developed several programs to educate children and teachers about food production and agriculture. One program near Fort Worth drew some 7,000 participants in 2000.

- **Information for all.** Information, the primary commodity of Land-Grant universities, is now available to the world. **Minnesota** researchers and NASA offer myriad sources of data on land, soil and environmental conditions to all takers. The project has spread throughout the Upper Great Lakes. States also offer on-line disease and pest diagnostic services to answer questions of urban and rural residents alike. **Oklahoma State** Extension produces a weekly television show, "Oklahoma Gardening," which is ranked the most popular Oklahoma-produced show on public television. **Missouri** Extension helps disabled gardeners via the Gardens for Every Body Web site, which was developed through the AgrAbility Project.
- **Family matters.** Working parents in Dayton needed a safe, educational place for their children to go after school. **Ohio State** 4-H helped establish an after-school program offering a wide range of activities.
- **4-H isn't just for farm kids.** These days, 4-H is part of city life. **Colorado State's** 4-H Young Entrepreneur Gardening Program prepares middle-school youth for the workplace. It is helping youths living in Denver's high-risk urban neighborhoods sharpen career skills and serve their communities. **Idaho** 4-H offers urban youths a Sport Fishing Program that teaches aquatic ecology, fishing skills and ethics.



**Cooperative State Research, Education,
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